EM Recovery NEWS FLASH

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Recovery Act Invests in Cleanup, Preservation of Hanford Site Locomotives, Railcars

Photo above: A remote-controlled, self-propelled trailer transports one of two locomotives to its final destination at the B Reactor, seven miles from where the engine had been stored.

Photo left: A pull-up gantry is used to hoist a cask car prepared for transport to Hanford's Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility

RICHLAND, Wash. – With the help of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Hanford Site is preserving the history of its locomotives and railcars as workers clean up the legacy of the Cold War.

In the recently completed railcar project — a $5.5 million effort funded by the Recovery Act — the Richland Operations Office and its contractors moved two locomotives and two cask cars onto reclaimed track at the B Reactor for permanent public display. Designated a National Historic Landmark in August 2008, the B Reactor is slated to become part of the national park system commemorating the Manhattan Project and is open for public tours.

Hanford once had 158 miles of railroad track that crisscrossed the 586-square-mile reservation. For more than 50 years, diesel locomotives hauled flat cars, tank cars and heavily shielded cask cars transporting nuclear material and fuel — irradiated in the site's nuclear reactors where the plutonium was generated — to storage areas and separations plants where plutonium was extracted chemically.

Before they were relocated to the B Reactor, the locomotives and railcars were inspected for surface contamination and treated. Because of the loads they once carried, the railcars also were inspected inside and out to determine the levels of residual radioactive contamination.

As part of the project, workers also disposed of railroad equipment in Hanford's Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility.

"It was our job to get these cars into a safe condition and off the line," said Earl Lloyd, project manager for Fluor Federal Services, which managed the movement of the railroad equipment under its subcontract with CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company. "This project has been particularly satisfying because it's meeting so many objectives. We're cleaning up the site, shrinking the active footprint, and preserving history. Our work today will allow generations to come understand the way Hanford worked and the impact it had on our nation's history."

Flour used innovative, cost-effective methods to lift and transport the heavy equipment. Crews employed a pull-up gantry, which could be repositioned easily and quickly, instead of staging cranes at multiple locations or assembling a single crane numerous times. Use of the pull-up gantry helped shave up to $400,000 off the project's total cost.